the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, and later as the U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia during the Nixon administration. An internationally respected expert on the Middle East and energy issues, Ambassador Akins has been an active and outspoken proponent for a just resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. He is a respected and highly sought speaker and analyst on the Middle East peace process as well as Arab politics in general. Author Jeans-Jacques Servan Schreiber called Ambassador Akins ''the westerner who knows the most about the Middle East and has the closest relationship of trust with its leaders.'' Ambassador Akins is a director of the Liberty Alliance.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO MANCEL PAGE

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 8, 2004

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mancel Page, a dedicated watchmaker from Grand Junction, Colorado. Mancel is retiring at the age of 81 after 40 years in the jewelry business, and I want to take this opportunity to recognize his many years of service to his community before this body of Congress and this Nation.

Mancel came by the jewelry business naturally. His mother's uncle was a jeweler in Germany, and Mancel began taking apart and repairing clocks when he was ten years old. His store, Page Parsons Jewelers, located on the main street of downtown Grand Junction, was founded in 1895 and is one of the oldest businesses in the city. Mancel, grew up repairing clocks and loving sports. He played basketball for his school in Missouri and during the time he served in the military during World War II. Athletics are something outside of work that he still makes time to enjoy.

While in the military Mancel worked at a local jewelry store and then went on to college to study gemology before becoming a certified gemologist. Mancel and his wife Anna moved to Grand Junction in 1950 and bought the jewelry store in 1964. Through the decades Mancel has enjoyed great success. Mancel is also active in Grand Junction community organizations such as the Downtown Development Authority, and the downtown merchant's association that have been instrumental in revitalizing the downtown area to be more customer friendly.

Mr. Speaker, Mancel Page has dedicated 40 years to the jewelry business and his efforts in the Grand Junction community are highly commendable. I am honored to recognize his many years of service before this body of Congress and this Nation. Thank you for all your hard work Mancel, and I wish you, your wife Anna, and your daughter Peggy all the best in your future endeavors.

DEMOCRATIC PROGRESS IN KAZAKHSTAN

HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 8, 2004

Mr. HALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the Republic of Kazakhstan on its continued—and steady—progress toward building a democracy. In particular, I note the recent parliamentary elections held in Kazakhstan on September 19. While the elections show that Kazakhstan has work to do in order to more fully meet international standards for democratic elections, they were a significant improvement over past elections.

Earlier this year, I was visited by members of the Kazakhstan Embassy. Among other information I learned that Kazakhstan gained its independence in 1991. It held its first multiparty election in 1994. In 1999, the republic conducted parliamentary elections that were widely criticized by the international community. Since that time, Kazakhstan passed a much-improved law on elections, held twelve televised debates, conducted effective voter education, permitted more than 1,000 election observers to monitor the elections, and registered 12 parties—including an opposition party that had been refused registration in prior elections. These are all positive steps forward for Kazakhstan—steps that were unthinkable in past elections. I thanked them for their visit—and assured them that as Chairman of the Energy and Air Quality Subcommittee, I looked forward to working out mutual energy thrusts helpful to both Kazakhstan and the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight to my colleagues an essay published by United Press International on September 25, 2004, and written by Gregory Fossedal, entitled ''Outside View: Big progress in Kazakhstan.'' The essay provides a balanced assessment of the recent Kazakh election.

Unlike many of his colleagues, Mr. Fossedal examines the elections within the context of Kazakhstan's young history. He looks at how far Kazakhstan has come since its independence and how it compares with its neighbors. Moreover, the essay makes a compelling case that, considering Kazakhstan's geographic and demographic position, its steady progress is important to U.S. security.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to read this essay and I would like to have the text of this essay placed into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD following my statement.

[From United Press International, Sept. 25, 2004]

OUTSIDE VIEW: BIG PROGRESS IN KAZAKHAN

(By Gregory Fossedal)

WASHINGTON, DC, Sept. 24 (UPI).—Kazakhstan held national elections on Sunday, prompting comments from a number of outside observers, and all the local opposition, that the vote was a step backwards for democracy. Was it that—or was it just not as much progress as democracy-lovers around the world, including me, might hope for?

To answer that question, we need to decide what Kazakhstan's admittedly sloppy democracy today is being compared to: the Kazakhstan of several years ago, other countries in the region 10 years ago, or Russia, China, Iraq or Florida?

By most of these standards, the country seems to have made mild but steady improvement. Progress, that is to say, motion towards a goal. Furthermore, considering Kazakhstan's geographic and demographic position, it's a steady improvement that's important to U.S. security and democracy in general.

Measuring a democracy's progress at the low end of development is a tricky matter, but Kazakhstan's recent vote appears to have at least two positive signposts.

First, the vote was held, and with numerous international observers. Some of these, especially as covered in the major press, had complaints about both voting mechanics and the social backdrop against which the vote took place—especially including reports of ''intimidation'' of some voters on Election Day, and the lack of a paper trail from voting machines used by about 20 percent of the voters.

In fact, to an extent, that's the point. Kazakhstan has now held a competitive election, with a largest number of international observers per capita compared to (say) recent votes in Venezuela, Indonesia or the Philippines. Critics can point out flaws, document the ruling party's heavy-handedness, and urge future improvements.

The most balanced report to emerge, by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, generated Western headlines saying the election ''failed the democracy test'' (The New York Times) and even was ''fraudulent'' (The Washington Times). But the report itself noted positive areas of ''progress'' as against previous Kazakh elections—the relevant unit of comparison.

Professor Frederick Starr of Johns Hopkins, who was in Kazakhstan as an observer, judged the voting to be fundamentally improved over recent Kazakh standards. ''Overall . . . the election was ''a step forward, not withstanding the imperfections,'' he said in a statement issued in Astana on Monday. Unfortunately, such views were not widely quoted in the international press.

Second, and more important, if the results hold up, at least one opposition party will be seated in the Kazakh Parliament. This is an important signpost in democratic development—as the evolution of Mexico, the Philippines, Pakistan, Turkey, and other countries shows. Looking back at countries that have completed a successful democratic transition, opposition seating is normally a key inflection point.

This doesn't mean that Kazakhstan will be a full democracy shortly, or even in five or 10 years; the government could always crack down and reverse direction. It is, however, forward motion.

In social terms, Kazakhstan also parallels some of the developments seen in Mexico or the Philippines in the 1980s. Income is surging, the economy has grown at an 8 percent to 12 percent pace each of the last five years. This, in turn, is generating a middle class with greater access to information, and insistence on freedom of expression.

Kazakhstan doesn't enjoy much of a domestic free press, for example. But foreign newspapers and magazines are available in most cities. Mobile telephone usage has more than tripled over five years. In 1997, there were as paltry 15,000 Internet users. This rose to more than 70,000 in 2000, more than 150,000 last year, and probably exceeds 200,000 today.

That's still small for an emerging middle-income country with 16 million people. But of course, every such user has family, friends, and business associates. In emerging democracies, as in Poland in the 1980s, information can spread quickly. As well, Kazakhstan now has a number of independent service providers less amenable to direct government control.

The government has tried to block access to critical news sources at home and abroad. Such efforts, however, are generally doomed to failure unless one goes all the way and imposes direct, government-controlled net access only—something the government has stepped back from doing.

Sergei Duvanov of the Institute for War and Peace Reporting outlined how Kazakhs were able to get around many of the blocks